

D. Ellsberg

HEADQUARTERS
UNITED STATES MILITARY AID COMMAND, VIETNAM
APO SAIGON 96222

MACJ53(LORAPL)

11 November 1968

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Dr. Fred Ikle
Social Sciences Division
The RAND Corporation
1700 Main Street
Santa Monica, California 90406

Dear Dr. Ikle,

I am taking advantage of a few moments of respite to let you know how the Long Range Planning effort is progressing. Despite the apparent lull in the war, military headquarters are still frantically formulating plans. This is normal for all headquarters. In the present situation, however, the planning effort has lost its sense of direction. There are ceasefire plans, withdrawal plans, contingency plans in case the enemy renews the fighting, "Hawk" plans, and "Dove" plans. It is a time of uncertainty.

Most military officers with whom I have talked, were dismayed by the bombing halt - They considered it a "sellout". - were somewhat relieved that Humphrey was not elected, but are still not sure what Nixon will do since he has yet to announce his course of action. The various planning staffs are trying to anticipate any move that could be made by the President or President-elect.

Large portions of the North Vietnamese Army have been withdrawn - Nobody seriously believes that they were pushed back - and the Viet Cong are restraining their military activities. Their motives are unknown. Although the enemy units have been battered, they are still capable of launching wide spread attacks or making some spectacular move and contingency plans must be made to meet any such eventuality.

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So the initiative rests with Washington or Hanoi as I suspect it always has. The planning effort in Vietnam anticipates and reacts. By itself it is aimless and hardly ever takes the lead.

That is perhaps the principal difference between the Long Range Planning Task Group of which I am a member and the numerous other planning organizations. We are attempting to examine the US ultimate objectives in Vietnam and Southeast Asia, deduce from these implied component objectives, and produce a long range plan to attain those objectives or if the constraints, present and projected, make that infeasible, then propose new and feasible objectives.

The general attitude of the other Staff toward Colonel Marshall's unique collection of Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine officers, PhD's, civilians, and cops is one of hostility. Our presence and our more direct line to General Abrams is an insult to their competence. It is especially so when our findings reveal the inadequacies of their own planning effort. Even the general officers regard LORAPL (the acronym for Long Range Plans - pronounced lore-apple) as a potentially "dangerous" organization. It does not fit their concept of a regular Staff, is commanded by a former Harvard professor of anthropology, and says things that cast aspersions on their own competence. More generals are bureaucrats than are commanders.

MACV headquarters itself is a sprawling two story metal building painted an awful shade of "almost yellow". The interior was designed by a surgeon working with an auto mechanic. Gerry Hickey calls the place an "air conditioned rabbit warren". In contrast, Saigon is gaudy and gay as usual. In spite of its traffic, noise, and odd smells, I do enjoy it.

My moment of respite has ended. I look forward to talking to you upon my return which will be about November 25th.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "BRIAN". The signature is stylized with a large, looped initial "B" and a horizontal line extending to the right.

BRIAN MICHAEL JENKINS
Long Range Planning Task Group
MACJ53